

## **Miles Copeland**

### **Music industry legend**

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**Welcome to media masters, a series of one-to-one interviews with people at the top of the media game. Today I'm joined down the line from the Dordogne in France by Miles Copeland, the legendary music business manager and record company mogul. Miles guided The Police from pubs to Shea Stadium headliners, and then managed Sting's solo career. His IRS record label discovered chart toppers, including R.E.N, Squeeze and The Bangles. The son of a leading CIA agent, Miles grew up in the middle east as regimes toppled and himself has advised the Pentagon forging links between the Arab world and the west. He recounts all of this and more in his new memoirs 'Two Steps Forward, One Step Back' Miles, thank you for joining me.**

Nice to be here.

**Now, I mean let's start with what must have been a real high point of your life, The Police emulating the Beatles by selling out Shea Stadium.**

Well, it was a moment where you realize just how big everything had got, we had various reports, somebody said it's sold out in eight minutes. Another person said it was a few hours, but whatever happened, it was 80,000 people. And I remember walking out on the stage to introduce the group and I walked out there and the whole place just went crazy, flashbulbs going the whole lot, and it was so overpowering. I think I was on the stage for maybe a minute. You know, I walk up the stage and I'm on the side of the stage and I'm shaking. And then I just thought, you know what? Those three guys were going to walk out on that stage and they're going to be there for an hour and a half to two hours facing what I just faced and I'm shaking. Anyway, yeah, it was a real moment.

**I bet, I mean I don't think I'd have the balls to do it really, to stand in front of all of those people to even just speak, never mind sing and play your heart out.**

Well, I kind of liked walking out in front of a lot of people and talking, but that was one where you weren't really allowed to speak because the whole place went crazy. The minute you said the word, 'The Police,' it was just bedlam. I don't know if they even heard me.

**I mean, that's incredible. Of course the drummer Stewart is your brother. Did you ever want the attention that he's received or were you quite happy to be the guy in the background making it all happen?**

Well, I think I go through life being Stewart Copeland's brother, I say, well, you know what? I've done a few things myself too, but hey, if people want to call me Stewart Copeland's brother, and that's my claim to fame, why not? But you know, the reality is that, when I wrote the book, they said, well, you should open something big, like Shea Stadium, you know? But the reality was when people asked me, what's the most important gig you ever did? I would say, well, no, it was not Shea stadium. It was the four people in Northern New York when The Police walked on stage and looked out in the audience and they saw four people who had actually bought tickets and most groups would have turned around and said, well, the hell with it, we're not going to play. But they said, well, hey, these four people bought tickets. It was our first tour of America, nobody knows who we are, let's give him a hell of a show. And they went out there and they just killed it. And then one of those people happened to be a DJ and they gave him the single Roxanne. And he was so enamored with the group, he went back to Boston and started playing it on his radio station. And that was really the making of the police that started the whole ball rolling. So, you know, the most important show the police ever did was to four people,

**Incredible. Listen, all superhero stories have that origin at the beginning. So let's go back to the beginning. You were born at an early age, how the hell did you get from there, a screaming baby to where you are now? You know, one of the biggest, most well-respected names in the music industry?**

Well, my father was OSS, you know, which was America's intelligence service during the war. And he went to London and met my mother who was in British intelligence, SOE, and I was the result of that. And then after the war, he was asked to go to Washington to help centralize all of the various intelligence agencies that had grown during the war, and hence that's the name of the central intelligence agency. It was

really a combination of different agencies. Once it was organized, he was then told, we'll station you, where do you want to go? And he said, well, I'll go to the middle east, and so he was stationed in Syria. And, so I sort of spent the first 25 years of my life in and out of the middle east in Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria. And for some strange reason at age 12, my brother Stewart got interested in being a drummer from Beirut, Lebanon. I mean, how on earth could you possibly do that? God knows. Some of his friends asked him to come and play drums for them in some little club, and I went along to check it out, go and check out my little brother. And I'm looking up on stage and there's my little brother playing drums. And I'm thinking, wow, you know, I love music, but wow, he's actually playing music, you know? And I think that probably planted a seed in my head to think maybe I too can be in the music business. So, later on, when I graduated from the American university there in Beirut, I went to London and I was approached by a British group and said, be our manager, and I thought, well, that's the craziest thing I ever heard of, but I thought, well, what the hell? So I became a rock and roll manager.

**It's incredible. I mean, your dad actually was instrumental in founding the CIA wasn't he? And Kim Philby was a regular family visitor in Lebanon, your family sort of actively involved in regime change in the middle east. I mean, you must have some incredible tales to tell if you, if indeed you're even allowed to tell them.**

Well, the funny thing was many years later, when I was asked to go to the Pentagon to advise how to win hearts and minds in Iraq after American invaded Iraq, they wanted to use entertainment as a way to kind of win friends, little did they know that my father had helped put Saddam Hussein in power, cause back then, I remember my father saying, well, Saddam is a bad guy, but he's our bad guy, and that was kind of an interesting turn of events really. But, yeah, I mean, I started off in something, I never imagined I'd be going into music business. I knew nothing about music, especially in England, I was a fish out of water, but I knew what I liked. And I think that was really the secret of what helped me succeed, I went for things that I liked.

**So what came next? You came to London, you carved out a niche booking bands on the college rock scene?**

My first real group is a group called Wishbone Ash. It was the sort of the progressive rock era, you know, and we'd get a band and go up and down the M1 and play all the little teeny clubs, you know, the same places that, Led Zeppelin and The Who and all these bands that played, and then we went to America and I slowly learned the ropes, what to do and what you can't do. And I think the thing that probably worked

for me was the fact that I had an American accent. So when I'd call up some club in Manchester or something, they probably were used to hearing some guy call up with a Cockney accent or something. You know "I've got this group," so here this American is on the phone and they're thinking maybe he is somebody, maybe we better pay attention to him. So I think that sort of helped me, you know, it's sort of the same thing that happens when the British go to America, it's a bit of a different kind of voice. So you think maybe this person means something, so they paid attention to me when maybe they wouldn't have if I was an average English, but so probably alighting in London was probably a smart move.

**I do the same. I mean, 80% of my client revenue comes from the US and one of my clients once said to me I basically monetize the fact that I sound like Daphne from Frazier.**

I think people always look for something that sort of stands out as being different. And in 1970 in England an American accent definitely was different enough to make people pay attention. So I managed to make people pay attention to me, but I really knew absolutely nothing about the music business. So I learned by making mistakes and every now and then I'd have success, and learned from both. And I kind of say that in the book, you know, you can learn as much from a success as you can from a failure. So both are important.

**We've got plenty of time. This is going to end up in a seven hour podcast as we need to go into the book in some great detail, very much looking forward to that. I read that sort of all the punk had opened everything up, you mentioned that you gravitated towards bands that could actually play, like The Police and Squeeze, was it a question of that because you were an outsider coming to this that actually you weren't sort of quote unquote so professional, like these professional critics that just seem to sneer at everything that you actually did it from the love of the music.**

The Punk thing was kind of strange in that I had just gone through a huge comeuppance and I was doing pretty well. And then I did this kind of big tour in 75, which was probably a great idea, but it was just fun and ended up being a financial disaster and I ended up penniless and everybody that had been in the business turned around and said, well, you know, Miles Copeland has finished, he's over, you know. And at the same time, the punks were starting in England, and you would read in the newspaper that nobody would book the groups and that record companies wouldn't give them record deals because everybody assumed that this was some sort of passing fad. And a lot of bands were forming that could hardly play their

instruments. And I remember Billy Idol saying to me, 'it's not about the music, man, It's about your stance,' and he got upset with me cause I represented Squeeze, and he said to me one day just how could you represent a group like that, they sing love songs. But the point was that nobody would pay attention to the punks, just like me, nobody was paying attention to me in the music business. But I knew my way around the music business by this time, because I had been with Wishbone and Curved Air and Climax and Renaissance and all these different kinds of bands. So I knew the club circuit, I knew going to America, I knew the record business. So the punks found a friend in me because they had no money and I had no money. So we had an affinity right away, but I looked upon it as they were not really a musical form. They were more a generation wanting their own heroes, their own thing, you know? So I thought, well, a new generation is coming forward, they're gonna find their own heroes and it's not a musical form, it's a generational change and that's going to win because then you can't hold a generation down. So I found myself getting very involved in punk music, but as time went on, a lot of the bands had to drop by the wayside, but the ones that actually had music ability carried on, you know, and The Police were one of them.

**I mean, tell us, how did he start to work with them? Was it that your brother said 'you should talk to my brother, he'd be a good manager.' It was obvious you were always going to do it. How did that relationship begin sort of professionally?**

Well, the first group that I thought was sort of punk was squeeze. They were very young, but they were more like the Beatles, really. They were singing songs of personal relationships or whatever. But then when the punk thing happened, I got very interested in it. And my brother's Stewart was in Curved Air, which has been a group that I had been working with. But as they sort of wound down after I had no money, Stewart also got interested in this whole punk thing. But what really excited him was the fact that you could go out and have a very small entourage. Three people was the maximum, his view was three people. That's as little as you can make it and make great music. You don't need a lot of roadies. You don't need a lot of equipment. You can break the rules, you can do it your own way. That was what was exciting about the punk thing. And I tried to help out from the sidelines, but of course, a lot of people were looking at Sting who had been in a jazz group called Last Exit that Andy Summers had been in, Soft Machine, which was, you know, the archetypical progressive rock band, and Curved Air. So one could hardly say they were typical punks, but they got excited about the energy of the punk movement. And they, when they started bringing in the influence of reggae and whatever. And I said, well, let's record an album, and we went and recorded the album. And that's when I

went in and they started playing me all these different songs and they really weren't what I expected until they played Roxanne.

### **And then you said to them 'that's the hit single?'**

Yeah, they objected, they didn't want me to hear Roxanne because it was a ballad and it was a love song basically, you know? And I said, well, 'come on play it, I've come all this way.' And that was the last song they played me, and as they are playing it, I'm listening to this song, I'm thinking to myself now this is really what The Police is. This is something unique. And I looked at the end of the song, they were expecting me to say, it's a load of crap, you know? And I said, gentlemen, you've made a classic. It's too big for me. I'm going to take it to A&M records and get you a major record deal tomorrow. And they looked at me like I had two heads. Like 'you liked that song?' And I think that was the change. Cause I think back to Sting, might he had, you know, Can't Stand Losing You and Every Breath You Take and Walking on the Moon, all these great songs lurking in the back of his brain, you know, which he was probably afraid to play, but Roxanne opened the door and that really opened the door to America. And that's the song that excited this DJ and in Northern New York that played it on his radio station and that launched everything.

**It's fascinating. I mean, is the job of a manager then to sort of be that objective, coach, judge even in Sting's solo career, you remind him how to write a hit song, sometimes all artists get so close to it that they can't remember whether it's good or not, if that makes sense, cause they, they can't look at it objectively.**

Yeah. I think a manager really depends on the act because there's no one rule of what a manager is. But in my case, I think that it always helps to have somebody on the outside, who's going to tell you the truth and is going to point out things that maybe you're too close to and you won't notice yourself. And I think that was the case with The Police. And I remember Sting saying to me one day, just tell me the truth because he wanted somebody who we could trust that would give him the right news. Because so often when somebody becomes a star, people tell them what they think they want to hear. 'Oh, you're great.' So everything they do is great. So they begin to think, well, everything they do is great. Well, of course I don't care who you are, whether you Beatles or Elvis Presley or whoever, not everything you do is going to be great. So a manager who can say, look, this bit is great. This bit is not, I think you should fix this. And an artist who actually listens, I think that's the combination that worked for me in The Police, because they did listen to me, they didn't accept everything I said, but they accepted enough that it kept me encouraged to keep

coming up with more ideas. And I think they looked upon me as somebody that had good ideas, but of course every now and then I had crazy ones too. And they were smart enough to reject the crazy ones and take the good ones.

**I mean, I've got a vague idea, or I think I have about what a music manager does, but when I actually tried to think, okay, it would be this, I actually don't know. What is it negotiating with record companies, concert promoters? Are you there in the studio offering feedback? What was a typical working week or month? What were the responsibilities of it? It's the kind of job that you think, you know but actually I've no clue.**

Well, in The beginning, the problem was very few people would pay attention, you know, and it's trying to get people to know who The Police are and would book them, and the same went for Wishbone Ash in the very early days is how do you get, you'd have musicians and they'd say, 'well man, it's all about the music' and I would have to say, 'well gentlemen, no, it's not all about the music.; Number one, it's about letting the world know you exist. Then it's about the music. Number one is, if people don't know you exist, they're never going to hear the music. So the job of a manager is to find a way to help the artists get noticed. Now it may be that the manager himself has good ideas, or he hires a publicist, who's got good ideas, or he finds some avenue that works, but the manager's job is to fill the blanks basically to do what the group can't do itself. You know? And the other thing is that a manager can sometimes, you know, go in, ask for things that the artists can't do. You know, I remember Sting saying to me, you know, he, he, he was hit on all the time for charities and there was never enough hours in the day for him to be able to do all the charities that, that hit on and that wanted to, you know, have him support them, you know? So he would inevitably say, yes, oh, I'd love to support your charity. Then he would call me up and say miles. I said yes to these people. I really would like to help them out, but, you know, there's no way I can fit it in. And it's conflicting with three other charities I'm doing, so can you call them and tell them I can't do it. So I would be the bad guy and I'd have to call up and say, well, no, I'm sorry. Then he's going to be in Timbuktu or something. So the manager can do things that the artists can't do, the same thing as money. Our manager can go in and argue money and business things where it's sort of unseemly for a group to do that. So, I think there's a scene in Sting's movie, 'Bring on the Night' where the musician is talking about money. And I'm saying, well, it's Stings, money, it's Sting's, you know, you're just a musician. And, and if Sting doesn't show up, everybody's going to want their ticket back. Whereas if you don't show up, nobody cares. You know, it was really a point that what I was saying was that the people will pay for the star, you know, but it is unseeingly for the star to be talking about money. That's what the manager does now. It couldn't be the accountant and it could be the lawyer, it could be all these other people. And really a manager's job is I

think in answer to your question, it's probably filling in the gaps and finding the people that if he can't fill in all the gaps, then he has to find people who can, like you bring in a lawyer and an accountant and a publicist and various other things. And you coordinate all those various people to help make them move forward.

**And is there an element of being a sort of a coach, a spiritual and moral guidance counselor, because everyone has ups and downs in their career and I imagine when you're on tour, it can be incredibly grueling being away from everyone, as well as great fun as well. But there must be an element of having to keep the band in check as well.**

There are certainly times where it's depressing, and other times things can get kind of crazy. People are showing up and groupies and people throwing drugs, and God knows what and inviting you to parties and also the crazy stuff. And thankfully all the groups that I dealt with or most of them anyway, had their heads screwed on, you know, but the temptations there were thrown at stars are pretty great. So a manager's job is actually to help the group maneuver and stay sane through all of this craziness. I think in the case of The Police, I remember getting a phone call when they were recording the second album in Holland or something. And I got a phone call from Sting and he said, 'Miles, you better hop on the next plane and get over here because this place is a bit crazy and I'm a bit worried about the group,' so I'm on the next plane. I go to Holland then of course, sure enough, there's all these people showing up. You know, now that the police have this big monstrous act, so that's part of the job of a manager, but the word manager really is the key word. It's coordinating all these, these elements. And sometimes you're coordinating it within the group. You know, one of the members is ill or you have to cancel shows or you have to reorganize, or you have trouble between different members of the group. You're trying to keep a lid on the thing and keep it moving forward. Sometimes the record company doesn't recognize things that you think should be happening. So you're fighting with a record company. It's really managing all the pitfalls and all the successes that are thrown your way on the way up to start them.

**And is it a little bit of the lack of the glamorous side of it, where your job is to tell people things they don't want to hear and fire people.**

Well, I have been fired before when I have told artists the truth because I learned very early on I'm good with artists who want to hear the truth. I'm not very good with artists who want to be lied to, I'm just not a very good liar, you know, and the truth is that there are artists out there that want to be told they're great. And they'll come to you and they say, 'hey, it's a great record. Isn't it?' And 'that's got hit singles all over

it.' And you're thinking, well, no, it isn't really that great. And you can do better. And you know what, there isn't a hit single here and then you tell them, and then they think you're wrong. Of course then they find out because you're right. You know, but I've been wrong too. I mean, there've been songs that I thought were hits that weren't, so nobody's perfect. I think the reality is on almost any walk of life, I mean, I know it myself, I sometimes have to listen to the people on the outside telling me what to do because I don't really think of it myself. So I think having an outside person whose job it is to make sure that you're going to move forward and is looking out for your best interests. I think that that's really what a manager does. And that's what I hope I did with The Police and Sting and Squeeze and Jools Holland, whatever. But a lot of times, you know, let's take Jools Holland. I mean, I recognize that he was just this great personality and I figured, well, he's the perfect person to be the host of a TV show we're doing on The Police. And so I went to Jools, and I said, would you host The Police? And he said, well, if you think I can do it, I'll do it. And I said, okay. And next thing you know, he did the, The Police in Montserrat that was then seen by the people that were looking for a host to do the tube. And he gets the job to do the tube. But now he's got a huge TV show in England, but really it was me recognizing the fact that he was just a great personality that could probably pull this off. And he did, you know, but as I always say, you know, I opened the door, maybe I saw that he had the talent, but he went through the door. I did, I was not walking on stage, the artist was, I opened the door, but they walked through, there've been other artists that I opened the door for, but they don't walk through, you know? And it fails. I think if I look upon myself, I say, well, I'm a door opener. You know, I'll find a door and I'll open it. But it's the artist that has to walk through that door.

**Are you a door closer though? Sometimes, I mean like The Police, for example, they were there in 1984, and they wanted to part company, do you say right, fellows, I get it, It's over. See you later. Or do you try to dissuade them? I mean, how do you navigate the sorts of politics, passions within a group?**

Well, a lot of times you don't have many options, you know? I mean, I remember Stan Ridgway from Wall of Voodoo when he came to see me and said he wanted to break the group up. And of course I was horrified because he had a single climbing the charts, Mexican radio. And I said, Stan, you're nuts. You can't break the group up. So I called his lawyer and I said, look, can we meet with Stan? We've got to talk him out of this. So the lawyer was horrified too, and so we took Stan to lunch. And by the end of the lunch, we thought we convinced him, at least hold it, hold on, let the single climb as high as it's going to be. And you know, so Stan leaves the lawyer and I look at each other and think, well, wow, we've averted a disaster, you know? Well, a few days later I got a phone call from Stan Ridgway, well, I told the group, you told the group what I told them, it's over. Oh no. You know, of course, now that the group has

broken up, you know, the single stop, dead and retreated cause no radio station and there's go play a single, if the group is over, it didn't work. I thought I had talked Stan out of it, but it didn't work other times, you'll be presented with a fate of completeness, the group broke up. What are you going to do? In the case of The Police, we didn't really want to announce that they broke up and we never really did until a few years later, it sort of dawned on everybody, Sting's being a successful solo artist. And, Andy did a solo work record and Stuart's doing movies and you know, maybe The Police was over, but we were afraid to actually admit it openly to say The Police is over because I think the light in the back of our minds, we were all thinking, well, maybe one day it'll happen again.

**It's interesting, isn't it? Because I was going to ask you about a set of skills that you'd have, if you're an accountant or a nurse or a doctor or whatever, you could sort of define them, but it's the job of a music manager. It's more about you being, you, isn't it, your personality, your judgment, your ability to connect with people. Is it a skill that you can connect with people and you've got judgment. It's more just who you are, isn't it rather than a list of skills that you have.**

It's not something you can learn in college. I mean, you know, I did a BA and I was in economics and all this, and I don't think I learned one thing in school that really helped me specifically in the music business. You know, I didn't learn contracts except by doing, but I probably learned how to learn, so maybe school was helpful and it made me, I knew what country was where, but the reality was that, you don't learn to be a manager in school. A lot of it is instinctual, you know, and a lot of it really depends on the artist you're working with because every artist is different. Some are very talented, some aren't so talented, some are talented in one way and they need help in another way. And it's a manager's job to try and make it, for instance, let's say they're not writing great songs. A manager's job would be to try to find somebody to help them write a better song, you know, maybe bring in a co-writer or something. I've had the experience of a lot of bands and particularly in the early days where they did not want to have writers, they figured it was selling out or something, but your job really is to help fill in the gaps. And the cases I talk about in the case of Sting, for instance, when I went in to hear one of his records, you know, I was thinking it was the fourth album or something. And I realized that he was kind of not really writing singles the way it used to. And I had said to him, well, what about this Sting? And, and he would say, oh, well, I see what you're saying, but I kind of liked the way it is. And you know, what if it doesn't work well, I'll pay the price. And he was the kind of artist that if he said he would pay the price of a mistake, then he was right. And I convinced him that we have to make a change next time, because I want a producer who will tell you when you're doing the song, whether you're doing the

right thing or not, because a little nudge here and there is really all it took to make Sting, make us take a song from a good song to a great song, you know? And I made the mistake of not being there and that album that I was criticizing, but the next album I was there. And I never helped Sting write a song, but I could nudge him this way or that way. And that might be the difference, you know? And I remember looking back at the songwriting things and when we used to have songwriting events, we would have three writers in a room and people would say, well, let's divide the song three ways because maybe one person is not really making a much of a contribution, except they said one word or one little line, but maybe that's thing that made the song a hit. So you really never know what that secret ingredient is and me as a manager, my job was really to throw out those little ingredients and hopefully they worked, and enough times they did, you know, and so I guess that's why you look upon me as one of the music managers. That means something, you know, because I was right more often than I was wrong.

**Well, I mean you're a one-off in so many ways. I mean, particularly because you're a free market advocate in a music world that thinks of itself as lefty liberal, progressive peace and love and all that. You even made a Channel 4 documentary setting out your worldview. You're not a typical music industry, peace and love guy, are you?**

Well behind the scenes, I don't know any artists who say let's give up our royalties and let's live on the poverty line. So, everybody in the record business is out to make money but they don't really like to say they want to make money. You know? I mean, it's always peace and light, you know, but they're not going to want to be the tough businessman because that doesn't sound very good. You know? So that's really what the job manager's job is to do the dirty work. So I was always looked upon as the tough guy who would tell it like it is, and I was nasty and that enabled the artists to be Mr. Nice Guy.

**I'm fascinated about that. So the ideological clash would work with someone like Sting and a humanitarian. Obviously he likes making money as well. How does that work? Cause, obviously other than the amazing music with Sting to things that everyone knows about him is that he's an amazing humanitarian. And of course the tantric sex thing.**

Well, that's funny is that the things that are the nuttier ones like tantric sex, he made one comment about that and it's lived forever. I mean, it's a great lesson in marketing. Sometimes you make some crazy comment and that becomes the thing that sticks with you. So, you're right. I mean, he is a humanitarian and he's done a lot

of humanitarian things, but I'm sure he's not unhappy that he's made a lot of money as well.

**Well, of course, absolutely. The old joke is I don't believe in casual sex, you either put your back into it or don't bother. I can't remember who said that, but I mean, tell us about the book then. It's called 'Two Steps Forward. One Step Back.' I ordered it on Amazon and it hasn't been delivered yet. So I've only read online, but I am looking forward to reading it, but it's not been a seamless ride, has it? You get fired by artists over money, regularly. Standing up to people has been, I hate the phrase, emotional rollercoaster, but actually I think that that's the gist of what I get from the book. It's about actually getting knocked down, but getting back up as quickly as you can and staying in the game, doubling your determination. It's more how to succeed as an entrepreneur in life, isn't it rather than being a music manager per se?**

Well, I'm glad you said that because I've had a couple people call me and say, well, they got a lot out of it. And that was really what I tried to do because the idea of a memoir where it's like, this is what I did. Aren't great you know, this is all my successes, that just really didn't sound very good to me. I wanted to have a book that would really mean something to somebody that they would get something out of it. My three sons, for instance, probably don't care about any of the groups that I worked with, but I would like them to read the book and be able to say, well, they learn something from it. They can apply it if they want to run a restaurant or if they want to start a small business. And I remember talking to some of the punk bands, you know, The Clash being one of them, where they were like, I said, 'guys, you know, you form your own band, you start your own little record company, you're entrepreneurs.' That was the gist of the comments. And in my programme that Channel 4, I would tell punk groups, look, you are free enterprise. You know, you form your own little business, you know, Sniffin' Glue magazine by Mark Perry. You know, it was a little enterprise, and it was classic capitalism, he didn't hurt anybody. He saw a gap, he filled it, he wrote a magazine and it sold, and that's what the punks were. They were classic free enterprise capitalists, and some of them ended up making quite a lot of money. Some of them didn't, but they formed their own business and weren't waiting for a handout from the government. They weren't socialists necessarily, although they would like to say they were, but they weren't, they were free enterprise people.

**I mean, I love reading the life and the lessons of entrepreneurs. I've never had a job. I started my first business when I was 17. I've never claimed a day's doll and I'm really proud of that. I have some highs and some awesome, amazing and some terrible lows. But I actually was going to ask you about that. One of**

**the things I'm really looking forward to reading in the book is I actually like reading about the failures of entrepreneurs, not because I take delight in the failures, but in how they got past it, how they kept their spirits up and redoubled their determination and were determined to learn from it. And, you know, lots of people don't really talk about the brutality and the genuine emotional challenges of life as an entrepreneur. And one of the best books I've ever read was Felix Dennis's book 'How To Get Rich' because it's not actually a get rich book. It's actually about, look, if you're going to be a successful entrepreneur, it's going to be 30 to 40 years of misery. You've got to push through and he's been betrayed and he's got things wrong and you know, and it was more like, here's the 10 things I got wrong in my career, and this is what you can do to avoid them. It was like a practical, you know, how-to manual.**

It was really that if you have a positive attitude, and you move forward, you're going to make mistakes, but learn from those and apply them to the next thing you do. And I think that really was the essential message of the book, but there are lessons, like people say, 'oh, you were brilliant.' You made a deal with A&M with very little money, but very high royalties. The reality was that I knew with The Police that I had great music, but that there was no press, there was no tour, they were not the darlings of the press. There was nothing really to sell the group. So if I walked into the record company and did the usual, well, okay, here's the record. I want a hundred thousand pounds, bang, bang, bang. I knew that they would throw me out of the office because it was risky and bold. So I walked in and I said, well, my job is, I want to get this record deal. I want to get in the game. So I'm going to make a yes, very easy. So I went in and I said, okay, the records, it's great. You got the record. You've got there, there's no risk attached. Now let me display the music. And I'll bet you that the A & R guy who did his job was to sign the act. It was the first time he actually listened to the music. Cause normally when you're signing something, you're thinking, all right, well, is there a hit single, is this going to eat up my budget? So I can't sign something else, what's my boss going to say, if it's a failure and you have all of these reasons why something would turn you off that you would say no. So I eliminated all those nos. So the only thing was, it was like, well, I kind of liked the record. That's a good record. And it's free. How bad could it be? Okay. Yes. You got a deal. And so that's how I got The Police deal. And the same went with IRS records as I knew a lot of these bands couldn't get in America. You know, the Buzzcocks, nobody would put their record out the cramps, the Go-Go's, uh, go down the list. You know, nobody would sign them in America, you know? And so I went in and I was beginning to have a bit of success with The Police and Squeeze. So I went into Jerry Moss And I said, look, I've got these bands in England that I've recorded. They would like to get their records out in America. Bands like Chelsea and these other Buzzcocks and whatever. But here's the deal. I don't need your money. Don't give me any money. No advances, all you

have to do is put the records out, have your salespeople tell you what they think they can sell. And he just said, well, how bad could that be? Okay, let's hear the music. I said, that's the only catch, you can't hear the music. Cause I knew that, he was kind of straight in terms of music he liked. So I knew that if he listened to the music, he would say no, but I made the yes very easy. So in the end he said, yes. So that's how I started IRS records. And you know, later on, a year or two goes by and I signed the Go-Go's and they told me the story afterwards, they said, no one would sign them. You know, why wouldn't they sign them? Because they were all five girls, you know, it was all girls. It was an all girl band. The manager was a girl. The lawyer was a girl, the five members of the band were girls, nobody would sign them. And I went to see them and I thought, wow, they've got great music. They've got great songs. The audience loves them. How bad could it be? What a great gimmick, you know, five girls who write their own songs and how bad could that be? And I look around us, no other record companies to be seen. And so I signed the Go-Gos for next to nothing. They were upset because I had offered too little money, but they had no choice. So they basically signed the IRS records. Well, thankfully for them and me, we had a number one Record.

**Do you have a reader in mind for the book, is it someone starting out on their journey? That's looking for the pitfalls to avoid and a bit of inspiration. What do you imagine the motivation is for some reading? Is it going to be someone that is a fan of The Police or the Go-Go's, is it a business book or is it part memoir? You know, who did you write it for?**

Well, it's partly to entertain people, you know? That's why you've got funny stories, some crazy stories in there because obviously in rock, you know, in the music business, you're going to come across some pretty crazy stuff, but the other thing is you want to inspire people to think you can do it. Cause I was told very early on there's no way you're going to succeed. What do you know, why do you think you can be a rock and roll manager? You know nothing. And it was true. I did though, nothing, but I succeeded. And it was really instinct. And you know, what I really did was I said, well, you know, at least I know what I like. And if I like something, I'm not that crazy. So it can't be that bad. So I think in a way I wrote the book to say, you can do it just believe that you can and do it, which was really the sort of the mantra of the punks was just do it because you know, some of the bands I later learned, they just bought the instrument a couple of days earlier and like the drummer and the Lords of the new church, he'd never been in a band before, and there were bands like that, you know, they just said, you know what, I'm going to be a rock and roll band. I'm going to, I'm going to do it. And they did. And I think that was the beauty of the punk thing. And a lot of the bands sort of started out thinking, well, who were they? They were

nobody, but they ended up the stars, you know? And so you can do it, you can succeed. I think that that's really who I wrote the book for.

**My niece is 17 and she's learning to drive at the moment and it suddenly struck me when I was helping her with the theory, examine everything that if I took my driving test now I'd fail it, I've been driving 30 years and that's probably why I wouldn't be fit to pass the test. You've achieved so much, but could you now in today's corporate controlled, woke, highly regulated social media thing. I mean, how's that, would that create more opportunities for you? Would it make it more difficult? I mean, you're a grafter and you're someone who's disciplined and determined. So I imagine you'd sort of punch through any problems, but you know, like someone like you would you have a harder or easier journey now than you did?**

You know, I go back to what I said a little earlier, you know the lesson really is the first job is to get noticed, and that has been the job always. The second job is to make the music work. Okay. So to get noticed in the old days, you would do it by putting up posters on the street or getting on the radio station or playing live shows, whatever there was some way to get noticed. Or, if you go back to Elvis Presley, you know, it was jiggling your legs. So the Beatles have long hair, but the job is always the same. You know, Lady Gaga today dressing up in wild clothes, you know, so that job now, maybe there are different avenues. Maybe you go to TikTok now, whereas before you would go to the melody maker, or you go to YouTube or you go to Facebook or Spotify or these other avenues. So the avenues may be different today, but it's the same job you have to get noticed. Once people notice you will then check out your music. And I think today in a lot of ways, if you've got the chutzpah and the motivation, there are ways that you can sitting in your living room on your computer, get into the game easier than way back in the old days where you really had to get a record deal and things cost a lot more money. So I don't know that it would be that much more difficult to do today than it was in the past. I think it's easy to say. So because everything really has changed, but the job is still the same. How do I get noticed?

**Again, there's a litany of things that make you unique Miles, there comes a stage in every music manager's career when Donald Rumsfeld calls at the request of the president after an intervention in the Middle East and asks you to win over Arab hearts and minds, with music take your position on the global stage. I mean, tell us how that came about. Tell us how that went, because I mean, that again is just yet another incredible chapter in your life.**

Well, and it really would start with Sting and Desert Rose, because I had been listening to this different music and I never really thought much about Arabic music until I got to France. And I heard Arabic music merged with Western music, and it was happening in France. It was a music called rye, these Algerian immigrants that had come to France and they had sort of mixed Western instrumentation with Arabic instrumentation. And they created this hybrid, which they called rye. And there were a couple of singers who were really great. One of them was Cheb Mami. And so I went to the record companies here, Virgin Records and to Universal records. And I heard some of the records and I got really enamored with the music. I thought, well, this is different. And so I took some of the records to Sting and I said, well, I don't know if you're going to like these or not, but I'm going to leave them with you because I think there's something going on here. And lo and behold, a couple of weeks later, I met up with him again. And he said, you know, those records you gave me, I kinda like them. And I got this idea and that's how we came up with Desert Rose, which was half an Arabic and half in English. We used the singer Cheb Mami who was singing in Arabic. Well, the fact that I had helped this happen meant that Arab artists began to think, this is an American guy who might like Arabic music. So I started getting phone calls and was hit on by Arabic artists. So the next thing I knew, I started signing some of these Arab artists and I became the biggest importer of Arabic music into America. I had to happen to help the Recording Institute of America on some issues they were having with the Congress. And I got to know the president of the report is to do it for America. And she knew that I was working with Arab artists. So they called up when the Pentagon called, the Recording Institute of American said, does anybody have a clue about Arabic music? And they said, well, there's only one guy in America that we can recommend. And that's this Miles Copeland guy. So that's why they called me. So I get this phone call from the office saying, we hear you're the guy, and we want you to come tell us what to do. So I received that phone call in utter shock. And I thought, well, I'm going to be a good American. I'm going to fly off the Washington report to duty at the Pentagon. And I'll tell him what to do. And that's what I did.

**What projects are firing you up now? I mean, you've had a hell of a career, you've made a decent chunk of money. You don't have to do anything. What are you doing?**

I do projects. I mean, I've always loved the guitar players. I work with Steve Vai. We do a project called Generation Axe, where we basically get a bunch of guitar players and you go to a show and you hear five or six different guitar players as opposed to just one and we have a house band. And so things change, I'm interested in sort of branding ideas, things where you're not necessarily reliant on an artist because you

know, one of the problems of the manager is if they're artists, the singer says, I don't want to this year. Well, there's no tour.

**What's a typical week for you at the moment. How are you juggling all the various projects? How does it work?**

Well at the moment, during the lockdown, I really had nothing much to do. So I just said people kept saying, you've got to write a book one day, you know? And I thought, well, now's my opportunity. So I sat down and started writing. So for the last year, I really had been writing the book and then I got a publisher and I've been doing that, but prior to that, I was still working with a couple of music projects. I'm not actively going out, looking for management acts or recording records and all that sort of thing. So I really I'm kinda open to something that excites me. I do other things, you know, but I think right now my latest thing is the book and I'm doing podcasts and one of the things I do like to do is go out and speak. So I'm hoping that the book will generate some speaking engagements so I can go out and tell people that yes, you can do it too. You know, I didn't know anything and you can do it too. And want to know stories about the rock and roll bands and some of the crazy things that happened. Well, I can tell them that too. And so that's really what I'm doing right now. So I'm kinda open really at this point,

**What's been the reception so far for the book? What kind of feedback have you had? How well has it gone down?**

Well, So far I'm very pleased to say that the book has gone down very well. I've had a lot of emails from people and calls and I've had reviewers call up and say, they want to do interviews and all that. So thankfully, a lot of people that are entertained, I had a couple of people that I thought would be very cynical, they would call me up and say, I read it, they were like, it was fantastic, love it, couldn't put it down. So I guess at this point, I, I have to say, well, you know, I guess it did what I wanted it to do.

**Have you got the bug? Do you think you'll be writing another book soon?**

Well, some people said what's next. So I guess I have to think about that.

**So it's sort of a bit of a standard question, but what is the secret of your success? When people ask you that, what do you respond? What's the answer?**

The answer really is what is the secret of my success? I mean, I would say basically it's having faith in that I'm not smarter than anybody else, but I'm not stupid or either, you know, and if I happen to really like something, then I figure, well, it must be pretty good because I'm not a freak. So if I like it, it must be okay. And what I need to do is find other people that are like me, who will also like, whatever it is that I like. So I think part of that lesson is that, you can do it, if you have enough faith in yourself, you know, I've had people that will come along and I'll say let me play you. One of my new records here, see what you think, you know, and see if you can pick the single and I'll play them the record and I'll say, well, what do you think is the best song? And I'll pick the single and I'll say, well, that's very good. You know, you've just picked the hit single, and I'll say, well, you know what? I should hire you as a person to choose the singles. And they'll say, oh no, no, I couldn't do that. I don't know anything. I said, yes, but you just did it. You know, you just picked the single, you know? And I said, well, basically, you're driving down the highway in your car and you hear a song. You play it. You know, you hear a song. You don't like it, you click the radio and you move to a different station until you hear something that you do. Like, so really a lot of it is just being honest with yourself. What do you like, what don't you like? What makes you respond? What doesn't make you respond? You can learn a lot by watching TV. Why do you watch one commercial and not another, those are really things you can learn from, so a lot of the, a lot of the things that are out there, the average person can take on board, just open your eyes and be honest with yourself

**Miles. That was a hugely interesting conversation. You Sir, are a legend. Thank you ever so much for your time.**

Well, I am always glad to talk. So if you think you've forgotten something, you want to ask questions next time. Let's do this again sometime. Appreciate being on your show.